

## CULTURE AND TRADITION SHOULD NOT BECOME THE OBSTACLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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**Abstract:** The bizarre culture and traditions which are barriers for gender equality in India. People are very sensitive for culture and tradition, they don't want to change easily. Men subdue women in the name of culture and tradition. Women don't know their rights, they surrendered their rights to men. Bizarre culture and tradition set up from the perspective of men. Some of the examples of bizarre culture and tradition are presented. Hardline people even cross the lines to prove their masculinity. Human Development Report, Gender Inequality Index and Maternal mortality ratio have been presented to show the position of India in the world. To eradicate gender inequality government has started some initiatives that is also mentioned. The paper attempt to conclude that there are some bizarre culture and tradition practice in India which is the major obstacle for achieving gender equality.

**Keywords:** Bizarre, Culture and tradition, Equality, Oppression.

**Introduction:** Culture is the integral part of every society. Culture plays vital role to shape the values of people and people passes culture and tradition from one generation to other so that it can be preserve and this a continuous process. But with the changing time most of the people don't want to modifies their tradition, as they think it will harm their Society, but the fact is that, culture and tradition are designed from the presctive of men. Our society is patriarchal and people are very sensitive about their culture. It is design in such a way so that the masculinity of men shouldn't hurt. Chimamanda Ngozi Achidi in her essay "we should all be feminists"says that "Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanityof women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture". Because of few rigid culture and tradition women are facing gender inequality. Gender inequality is a situation where female gender are deprived of getting their rights and they are treated unequal in the society.

**Outlook of Society:** One of the good example is of Haryana, where a magazine is published by government of Haryanva whith a photo caption of woman in veil and says that "women in veil is the identity of state". This the the shameful statement by government who is motivating that women should be in veil instead of providing them opportunities of equality in society. States like Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, the condition of women are very worst. How can veil defines woman's identity. Being in veil is not the definition of identity it is simply the killing of one's identity. Keeping women in veil can only satisfy the ego of masculinity.

In the name of tradition and culture, the veil system started. According to the tradition, veil symbolises that the women are respecting men, it symbolizes that women should submit themselves to men as they are dependent on men. But in the name of culture

and tradition if women are keeping away from their rights then what is the use of that culture and tradition. Respecting elders doesn't mean that women should be in veil or she should be deprived of getting her own basic rights. Identity is not defined by veil it is defined by an individual and her efforts to make own identity. It is right of every person to make their own identity and it is also given in Indian constitution that both men and women are equal. If women are subjugated in the name of culture and tradition then this type of culture should be abolished.

**Bizarre Cultures & Tradition:** One of the fact is that due to lack of acceptance of change most of the society is still living in the orthodox culture and tradition. Most of the men can't accept the fact that women are equal to them and due to this women are deprived of getting their rights. Only to pretend that men are superior to women this kind of culture and traditions are implement in the society and this is the big hurdle for gender equality. There are many examples of traditions and culture which are practicing in the society not only in Haryana but in all over nation, few of them are:

1) Dowry: One of the bizarre tradition which practice in India is dowry system, where parents of groom demand for money and luxurious items in the name of tradition from bride's family. And the parents of bride fulfil their demand so that their daughter should be happy in her husband's house with her in-laws. Because of tradition and culture the parents of bride willingly or unwillingly fulfils all their demands so that the groom and his family members should be satisfied. This tradition is encouraging gender inequality cause due to this girls can't make their self identity, female foticide is increasing as poor people can't afford dowry. And those who are rich, in the greed of money they prefer boy child so that

they can demand dowry in future. Those who are from financially unstable they either prefer boy child or they do discrimination with girl child. Dowry is leading not only gender inequality but also encouraging crime in the society. The worst part is that even educated people also gives and takes dowry. Demanding dowry is crime but still then people are practicing this kind of tradition which leads gender inequality in the society. Girls struggles for there own identity throughout their life. Because of dowry system many girls commits suicide. Apart from this there are many girls who don't get married because they can't afford dowry. Dowry is a bad stigma in society. This is a bizarre culture which should be abolished.

- 2) Triple Talaq: In Muslim law there is a provision given to men, they can give divorce anytime by saying "taqlaq" three times to their women. Their society accepts this kind of divorce. No concern of women is needed before having talaq. The position of women is so low that, if she don't want divorce, and her husband gives divorce to her she have to accept this, she can't go against the law. Triple talaq neglects the equality and dignity of women. Due to fear of saving her marriage life she never go against her husband, she tolerates all the abuses on her. This type of norms effects psychologically. Women are suppress in the name of law like this. There should be equal rights of both men and women. If they have tied in the bond of marriage together then, the decision of divorce should be mutual.
  - 3) Name change (First name) : This is a tradition peculiar in north Indian parts where girls change their first name as well as her last name post marriage. The New first name is calculated on her and her husband's combines astrological chart and the last name is same as her husband's name. Post marriage the girl have to forget the name given by her parents as her new name and surname becomes her identity. This shifting identity is practice not only in rural but in urban too. My question is, why this is only apply to women, why can't a man change his name and surname which is given by his parents? If after marriage a woman's life changes then man's life changes too, this tradition should be applied both of them. This tradition also leads gender inequality in society where for the entire life women searches her identity, which vanishes in the name of tradition.
  - 4) Female genital mutilation (FGM) : It is traditional customs practice by shia-muslims. It is locally termed as 'Khatna', this practice has no medical justification at all. Some of the reasons include family honor, increasing sexual pleasure for the male, enhancing fertility, social acceptance especially for marriage and preservation of virginity. The girls are generally circumcised just after or before they attain their puberty. So, the matter, even though unjust, gets buried inside the girls' mind like any normal process like menstruation. Many women believe that FGM is necessary to ensure acceptance by their community, else they'll not get married; they are unaware that FGM is not practiced in most of the world. It has been practiced since centuries. people are either too afraid or too embarrassed to raise their voice against such oppression. It can cause severe pain and shock, uterus, vaginal and pelvic infections, complications in pregnancy and childbirth, sexual dysfunction, difficulties in menstruation and psychological damages among many consequences. In the name of tradition women are enduring pain.
  - 5) Honor killing : One of bizarre tradition is practice in India is, killing a family member if she brought shame on the family, by doing love marriage, inter caste marriage, refusal to enter an arranged marriage, committing adultery, choosing a partner that the family disapproves of, and becoming a victim of rape. It is rooted in tradition, and especially seen in the area of Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, U. P Madhya Pradesh etc. In the year 2015, police registered 251 cases. Mostly girls becomes the victim of honor killing. For the silly reason people killed by their own family member only to protect the fake reputation, culture and tradition. Women activist are constantly fighting for this. This tradition is common among Hindus and Muslims. This is one of the major hurdle for gender equality.
  - 6) Food for males: This tradition is being practice in Rabha marriage in Assam, where newly bride is expected to made lunch for whole male members of the family, on the first day of her marriage. But according to tradition women of the family including bride can't even taste the food. The male member of the family will enjoy the food and will judge that how good cook she is or she will keep her husband happy or not. How can other person decide on the basis of food that how will be she. But in practical life when we do survey in all over India, the result will be opposite, majority of chefs in India are men if we look the ratio. Even then people believes that cooking is work of women and associated cooking with culture and tradition.
- Position of Women in India:** In Hinduism, people worship goddess Durga, Kali, Saraswati for power, strength and knowledge but in practical life they behaves with their wife as if she is his personal servant. According to the theory, women is considers as "Laxmi of the house" as she manages house take

cares of family members. But in practical life even after women manages house take cares of family members, they are treated as personal servant, men treats them badly, rudely. women are beaten by their husband only to show their masculinity. Women are not allowed to give their opinions or to become the part of any discussion related to their home. Women are expected to satisfy their men in any cost. Since the beginning of the society women are only means for men to burst out their frustration, either by physical abuse or by mental torture. Men inherited from their elders that women are their personal property whom they can treat the way they want. Those who are hartline Hindus they never allow their girl child to get educated as they believes, if they become much educated they won't follow tradition and culture. Instead of sending the schools they prefer girls to keep in house for housework. Places like Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh literacy rate of girls are very low. when they grow and become mother they will pass the similar tradition to their kids. Due to illiteracy, social instability is increasing. Due to this differentiate women don't know their right and whatever is happens to them they believe it as their fate.

Like Hindus, Muslim society is also patriacial society where women are dependent on men. In these modern world, women can become doctor, singer, engineer, actor even politician but men and women can't pray together. Men can give divorce to their wife by saying talaq three times but no rights are given to women if they don't like husband they can't give talaq to husband, they have to bare that marriage even if she don't want. Men can marry so many times it is allowed but women can't, if she do so then she will be liable to be punish. Women can't go outside without wearing burkha. Muslim women have accepted and internalized the kinds of roles their men want them to live with. They believe that this is what they made to do and they should accept the fact that, they should submit themselves to their men. Today situation of women in India is so bad that they have surrendered their own rights to their men. They don't have any idea whether they have any rights or not. This circumstances of women is not new. In the name of culture and tradition the women are oppressed from the centuries.

**Position of India:** India is ranked 131 of 189 countries listed in the United Nations Development Programme's latest Human Development Report 2016. India is ranked 125 of 159 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The ratio of maternal mortality is 174 against every 100,000 live births. Women are struggling since the beginning and now in 2017 also the situation is not that much improved.

Traditional patriarchal customs and norms have relegated women to secondary status within the household and workplace. Lack of gender equality not only limits a women's access to resources and opportunities, but also imperils the life prospects of future generation. The Government of India along-with various States have initiated a number of policies, programmes and schemes intended to reduce gender gap and to boost women's empowerment over the 1989-2017 period. Some of these notable initiatives are-the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Gender Sub Plan (under 8 th Five Year Plan), Women Component Plan (under 9 th Five Year Plan and many more. But, in spite of these attempts, considerable gender gap still exists. In fact, according to Global Gender Gap Report (2015) economic gender gap has actually widened by 1 per cent since 2006. Gender equality is the necessity of this time.

**Conclusion:** On the basis of above discussion we can conclude that, culture and tradition are the identity of society without culture and tradition no society can exist. It holds all the people together so that each and every person can live happily but if in the name of culture and tradition women are suppressed then the conservative culture and tradition should be banned. Our beliefs in culture and tradition are so strong that we hardly go against it. If any changes likely to happen, we don't accept it easily as it struggles with culture and tradition. If culture and tradition can't treat men and women equally then that is of no use and it should not be practice. If change in culture is for good then it should always be welcome. Change is inevitable. For every person culture and tradition should be pride and it applies to both men and women, it shouldn't be practice or follow unwillingly. We are living in a country where lots of examples are there of women who stand on their own in spite of Sociocultural barriers. Women have that much potential that they can do anything. This will be only possible if they will be treated equally. Equality is the right of women and every women should know what is her right. Against the sociocultural barricade they have to fight. The patriacial culture and tradition should be abolished for the equal society. Possibly, the change will come only with awareness, cultural restructuring, mindset shifting and through widening the access to public service delivery without discrimination on gender basis

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